

Rosa DeLauro

1943–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
DEMOCRAT FROM CONNECTICUT

1991–



Image courtesy of the Member

FROM HER WORKING-CLASS ROOTS, Rosa DeLauro worked as a political organizer, consultant, and aide before launching her own successful House career. With a seat on the powerful Appropriations and Budget committees and posts in the House Democratic leadership, Congresswoman DeLauro has become a leading advocate for working families and women's issues.

Rosa DeLauro was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on March 2, 1943, into a politically active family with roots in the Italian Wooster Square neighborhood of New Haven. Her parents, Ted, an insurance salesman, and Luisa DeLauro, a sweatshop seamstress, were New Haven aldermen. Luisa DeLauro was the city's longest-serving alderman, holding office from 1965 to 1998. Rosa DeLauro received a B.A. in history and political science from Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York, in 1964. She also attended the London School of Economics and earned an M.A. in international politics from Columbia University in 1966. DeLauro worked as a community organizer on urban renewal and initiatives to place minorities and women, and served as an executive assistant to the mayor of New Haven. DeLauro married Stanley Greenberg, an associate professor at Yale and, later, head of a national polling firm. She has three stepchildren—Anna, Kathryn, and Jonathan, and one grandchild, Rigby. From 1980 to 1986, DeLauro served as Connecticut Senator Christopher J. Dodd's chief of staff. She was executive director for "Countdown '87," a national campaign to stop U.S. military aid to the Nicaraguan Contras. From 1989 to 1990 she served as executive director for EMILY'S List, a political action group that supports pro-choice women candidates.¹

In 1990, when four-term Democrat Bruce Morrison retired from the House, DeLauro ran for his vacant seat encompassing New Haven in the southern part of Connecticut. She easily won the Democratic nomination and, in the general election, emphasized her Italian working-class roots and support for middle class tax cuts and universal health care. Her platform called for economic and transportation initiatives, particularly effective in a state that already was suffering from a recession

that would take on national dimensions in late 1991.² DeLauro won her first (and narrowest) election with 52 to 48 percent of the vote. In her subsequent seven re-election campaigns from 1992 to 2004, DeLauro was never seriously challenged, winning election to the 109th Congress (2005–2007) with 72 percent of the vote.³

When DeLauro was sworn in to the 102nd Congress (1991–1993) in January 1991, she received assignments on the Government Operations and Public Works and Transportation committees, as well as on the Select Committee on Aging. In the 103rd Congress (1993–1995), she gave up those posts to join the Appropriations Committee. She left Appropriations briefly to serve on the National Security Committee in the 104th Congress (1995–1997) but returned in the following term and has remained on Appropriations since. DeLauro joined the Budget Committee in the 108th Congress (2003–2005) and became the Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture in the 109th Congress.

In addition to her prominent committee assignments, DeLauro ranks among the Democratic leadership. In the mid-1990s, she served as Chief Deputy Whip. She twice lost races for the Democratic Caucus chair in 1998 and 2002, the latter by a single vote. In 1999, Democratic colleagues elected her to a newly created position—Assistant to the Democratic Leader. It made her one of the highest ranking Democratic women in the House. In 2002 and 2004, DeLauro was appointed co-chair of the House Democratic Steering Committee.

Representative DeLauro was described by one nationally syndicated columnist as a “hero for working families” for her work on labor and health issues. Inspired by her experience as a survivor of ovarian cancer, DeLauro authored legislation requiring health maintenance organizations (HMOs) to cover a 48-hour of hospital stay after mastectomies and secured research funding for cervical and ovarian cancer. She also has worked aggressively with a bipartisan group of legislators to lower the rising costs of prescription drugs. As a result of her efforts, the U.S. House passed legislation in the 108th Congress allowing the importation of drugs from countries like Canada. With rising instances of food safety and foodborne illness a concern for many Americans, DeLauro cofounded the Congressional Food Safety Caucus to explore remedies to secure the food supply. DeLauro supports an increase in the minimum wage and has authored legislation that would guarantee men and women equal pay for equal work. She led the effort in Congress to restrict the activities of corporate expatriates, U.S. corporations that avoid U.S. taxes by reincorporating offshore. DeLauro also has established numerous civic initiatives to improve children’s lives, including the “Anti-Crime Youth Council,” a program that sought to engage high school students on issues of violence, the “Kick Butts Connecticut” program, which recruits middle school students to act as antismoking counselors for elementary school children, and “Rosa’s Readers,” a program to interest first graders in reading outside the classroom.⁴

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, “Rosa L. DeLauro,”
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/>

NOTES

- 1 *Current Biography*, 2000 (New York: H.W. Wilson and Company, 2000): 145–147; *Who’s Who in American Politics*, 1999 (New York: Bowker, 1999).
- 2 *Current Biography*, 2000: 145–147.
- 3 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>.
- 4 “Official Biography of Rosa L. DeLauro” <http://www.house.gov/delauro/biography.html>; *Politics in America*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 191–192; *Almanac of American Politics*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: National Journal Inc., 2003): 347.